

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAN JO 02013 170031Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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P 162355Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0226

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2013

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CS

SUBJECT: EX-PRESIDENT FIGUERES WARNS OF GOVERNMENT
INEFFECTIVENESS

1. EXCELSIOR OF MAY 16 REPORTS THAT, IN AN ADDRESS BEFORE THE ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE ACCOUNTANTS OF COSTA RICA, EX-PRESIDENT JOSE FIGUERES, DESCRIBING HIMSELF AS IN A "SPIRIT OF PROTEST," STRESSED THAT THE COUNTRY MAY HAVE TO HAVE A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO MAKE ESSENTIAL CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT THAT WILL MAKE IT MORE EFFECTIVE.

2. FIGUERES QUALIFIED THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS, "EVEN THE MACHINERY THAT PRODUCES LAWS," AS "NOT RESPONSIVE TO THE NECESSITIES OF THE TIMES," AND ESPECIALLY WEAK AND INADEQUATE IN DEALING WITH THE CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACING COSTA RICA. FIGUERES REPORTEDLY ADMITTED TO BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR PART OF THESE GOVERNMENTAL PROBLEMS AND THEREFORE FELT AN OBLIGATION TO SPEAK OUT ON THE PROBLEMS HE SEES AND SUGGESTS REMEDIES. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE TRADITIONAL STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY IS ENDANGERED.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SAN JO 02013 170031Z

3. COMMENTING ON THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS,

FIGUERES REPORTEDLY DISCUSSED THE EXCESSIVE CONSUMPTION OF CERTAIN SOCIAL SECTORS WHICH IS AT A LEVEL NO LONGER SUPPORTABLE. HE CALLED FOR AN AUSTERITY PROGRAM TO CONTROL CONSUMPTION BUT THAT ENSURES A MINIMAL INCREASE

- IN OTHER WORDS, "A BETTER DISTRIBUTION OF THE POVERTY".

4. FINALLY HE WARNED THAT "THIS GOVERNMENT OR THE NEXT WILL FACE A POLITICAL CRISIS FROM WHICH I HOPE A MORE EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT WILL COME." HE REPORTEDLY DESCRIBED COSTA RICA AS "IN AN EXTREME OF ANARCHY AND OUR OBLIGATION IS TO CHANGE THE COURSE TO SOMETHING MORE EFFICIENT AND BETTER ORGANIZED."

5. COMMENT: FIGUERES HAS TALKED FROM TIME TO TIME IN THE PAST ABOUT THE NEED FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SINCE HE LEFT POWER THAT THE EMBASSY IS AWARE THAT HE HAS MENTIONED THE SUBJECT PUBLICLY. ONE ASPECT OF THE CONSTITUTION THAT FIGUERES IS KNOWN TO WANT CHANGED IS THE PROHIBITION AGAINST EX-PRESIDENTS RUNNING AGAIN. ANOTHER IS THE PROCEDURE FOR ELECTING DEPUTIES.

6. WHAT DOES NOT MAKE SENSE IS THAT IF FIGUERES IS ONLY DESIROUS OF OPENING THE ROAD TO HIS REELECTION, WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR SUCH A DRASTIC MEASURE AS A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY? THE SUPPORTIVE POSTURE OF THE UN-PAQUISTA DEPUTIES TO THE PLN FRACTION SUGGESTS A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROCESS WOULD BE MUCH SIMPLER AND CAUSE LESS TENSION. IF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WERE CALLED, IT SEEMS THAT PEPE MIGHT HAVE MORE AMBITIOUS OBJECTIVES THAN JUST CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION TO PERMIT HIS REELECTION.

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